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SUBJECT: KAPISA GOVERNOR REPLACES ALASAI DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR,
VILLAGE ELDERS APPROVE IN A DRAMATIC SHURA

REF: KABUL 636
¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Kapisa Governor Abu Baker is moving aggressively
to establish political control in concert with a major military
operation reestablishing Government of the Islamic Republic of
Afghanistan (GIRoA) presence in Alasai Valley after more than a year
of Taliban control. On March 11, the governor replaced the Alasai
district administrator with a reportedly competent administrator,
despite lacking the formal authority to do so. Abu Baker's deputy
governor and the sacked administrator traveled to Kabul to protest
the action to Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG)
head Jelani Popal, but received little more than a promise to review
the action. Reportedly, Abu Baker may move to replace the deputy
governor and the Tagab administrator soon as well. END SUMMARY.

Governor "Removes" Alasai District Administrator
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¶2. (SBU) On March 11, Kapisa Deputy Governor Haji Safi called the
PRT to report that Governor Abu Baker had "removed" Alasai District
Administrator Momonhan Muslim and replaced him with Engineer Mullah
Mohammed. Although there was an incident involving Muslim at the
March 10 shura in Tagab (reftel), the removal was reportedly
unrelated. Safi, who fears that he too will be removed in the
coming days, claimed that Muslim was removed for interfering in and
protesting against what he considered the illegal transfer of
government land in Alasai to Hezb-i-Islami (HiG) elements who are
reportedly tied to the governor. Safi also said that Tagab District
Administrator Akhunzada was being targeted for removal in the coming
days. Sali and Muslim traveled to Kabul to meet with IDLG head
Jelani Popal to protest the govenor's actions since he has no
authority to remove district administrators. Popal pledged to send
a team to Alasai to investigate the issue and "see what IDLG can
do," but did not give a time frame for the action.

Alasai Elders Respond

¶3. (SBU) Governor Abu Baker organized a meeting on March 17 with
Alasai elders to discuss security and governance issues. What had
been scheduled as a small meeting became a full-fledged outdoor
shura, including 120 Alasai elders. Through the governor's
orchestration, supporters of Mohammed packed the crowd as the
governor explained his firing of Muslim after fielding complaints
from hundreds of Alasai residents about Muslim's conduct and ties to
the Taliban. The governor claimed to have discussed the issue with
President Karzai, who approved of his decision. He pressed Alasai's
citizens to work with the new district administrator to improve
security so development would quickly follow. Several elders rose
to agree with the governor and his choice of Mohammed, squarely
placing the blame for deteriorating security on Muslim, and accusing
him of allowing the Taliban to flourish in the district, including
by selling humanitarian assistance on the black market rather than
distributing it, thereby pushing people towards the enemy. Mohammed
then prompted a dramatic response of endorsement from the elders by
stressing that he had not sought the job, but that he would do his

best to improve their quality of life.

Comment

¶4. (SBU) Governor Abu Baker's choice for the new Alasai district administrator and the timing of the announcement were politically shrewd moves intended to increase his strength in Southern Kapisa. Mullah Mohammed checks all the necessary boxes: Pashtun, educated, experienced, and from the opposition party (the Governor is Hezb-i-Islami, Mohammed is Jemiat) - to avoid the semblance of political favoritism and to establish credibility in Alasai. Mohammed's reputation coupled with a passive demeanor makes him the perfect conduit for the governor to continue to exert control in Alasai, so much so that when Mohammed initially declined the offer, the governor reportedly threatened him saying, "you don't want your kids to be sorry." If Mohammed can maintain security while showing tangible improvements, he will likely escape the allegations of corruption that dogged his predecessor. As someone who really does not want the job, he may be just the man for it.

¶5. (SBU) Mohammed will face considerable pressure from the governor and his HiG friends, to which he will occasionally have to acquiesce, and he will likely be forced to tolerate some amount of criminal activity. He may also find himself in the middle of tensions between the governor and deputy governor, who is from his party (Jemiat) and was once his professor in school. The crowd's widespread acceptance of Mohammed bodes well for his ability to govern the troubled district, although his actual level of support is questionable. Once the current Afghan National Army (ANA) operation has cleared the district and ANP presence is increased, Mohammed will be able to deliver development projects to a populace desperately in need of them.

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